

B.F. Goodrich in Rialto

The people ~~trans~~ferred to Rialto in September, 19~~56~~ 57 were originally employed at the B. F. Goodrich Research Center in Brecksville, Ohio, a small town midway between Cleveland and Akron, Ohio. The center's purpose was to support both the B. F. Goodrich Tire & Rubber Co. of Akron and the B.F. Goodrich Chemical Co. of Cleveland. These people had worked for several years on contracts with the U.S. Army Ordnance Division in research and development of solid rocket propellants. The company then decided to go into the manufacture of solid propellant rockets. Since Brecksville had become an upscale residential community, the limited amount of explosive material permitted at the Research Center handicapped any expansion in solid rocket activities, so B.F. Goodrich decided to look elsewhere.

During World War II, the U.S. Government developed an ammunition storage area in the wilderness north of Rialto. A number of bunkers designed to store ammunition were built there. This area was far enough inland to preclude shelling by off-shore Japanese warships. After the war, the West Coast Loading Company, a Division of Kwikset Locks built a plant at the site for the manufacture of pistol flares and parachute flares. The plant that they built consisted of over 70 scattered small buildings, most of which were constructed of corrugated sheet metal over a light wooden framework. This was because of the explosive materials involved. It precluded the accumulation of large amounts of explosives in one area, and if an explosion did occur, the damage from flying debris was minimized.

Later, Kwikset Locks decided that they did not wish to remain in the flare business, so they closed down the West Coast Loading Company and put the plant up for sale. There had been at least one fatality and some serious injuries during the plant's operating history.

This plant and its location appeared to be well suited, with minor modifications, to the manufacture of solid rockets so the B. F. Goodrich Company bought it and transferred the entire staff of 10 people on the Army Ordnance Research Project to the Rialto Plant. Since the U. S. Air Force was in the process of transferring its rocket activities from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base to the Edwards Air Force Base in California, this seemed to be a potential source of business for the Rialto B. F. Goodrich facility. The first contracts at the Rialto Plant were solid rocket propellant research and development programs with Edwards Air Force Base. Later there were contracts with the Naval Ordnance Test Station in China Lake, Calif. including work on the Sidewinder Missile. There were also contracts for atmospheric sounding rockets with a number of small companies in Southern California and Arizona. Employment grew to over 100 people. The management included Harold Catt, General Manager and Archie Japs, Technical Manager.

In around 1963, the growth of the business began to wane, with key contracts going to competitors. The company decide to close the plant in 1964. Most of the original 10 employees went back to Ohio to work in other B.F. Goodrich Divisions, many of which later left the company to explore new avenues.